

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 04654 01 OF 02 221930Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 INR-10 L-03 ACDA-12
NSAE-00 PA-02 SS-15 SP-02 USIA-15 TRSE-00 H-02
NSC-05 /084 W
-----088555 221950Z /70

R 221924Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4469
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO USMISSION USNATO
USNMR SHAPE
USCINCEUR
CINCUSAFE
HQ 3AF RAF MILDENHALL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 04654

DEFENSE FOR SECRETARY BROWN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY/ISA
MCGIFFERT AND CSAP

E. O. NA
TAGS: UK, NATO, MPOL, MILI
SUBJECT: RAF GREENHAM COMMON

REF: LONDON 4595

THE TIMES OF 22 MARCH, UNDER THE HEADLINE "PROTESTORS
SEE AMBASSADOR ABOUT BASE: (PLAN FOR EXPANDED AIRFIELD
FOR USAF TANKERS WOULD BRING INTOLERABLE NOISE,
RESIDENTS SAY), PUBLISHES IN FAIR DETAIL MANY OF THE
POINTS MADE BY MCNAIR-WILSON AND THE BRITISH DEPUTATION
(REFTEL) WHEN THEY SAW THE AMBASSADOR ON 21 MARCH. AS
ISSUE IS CONTENTIOUS AND IS DRAWING FAIR AMOUNT OF
PUBLIC ATTENTION, WE QUOTE ALAN HAMILTON'S ARTICLE IN
FULL.

BEGIN TEXT: PROTESTORS FROM NEWBURY CALLED ON THE
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PAGE 02 LONDON 04654 01 OF 02 221930Z

UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR IN LONDON YESTERDAY TO URGE HIM
TO STOP HIS COUNTRY'S AIR FORCE TURNING ITS LOCAL
AIRFIELD INTO ONE OF THE LARGEST MILITARY REFUELLING
BASES IN EUROPE.

RESIDENTS OF THE SOUTHERN END OF THE BERKSHIRE
TOWN WERE INCENSED TO DISCOVER LAST MONTH THAT RUMOURS
FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS THAT THE USAF WAS PLANNING TO

DEVELOP GREENHAM COMMON AIR BASE WERE TRUE.

THE HURRIEDLY ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE REACTIVATION OF GREENHAM AIR BASE IN ITS FOUR WEEKS OF EXISTENCE HAS STAGED A SILENT PROTEST MARCH THROUGH THE TOWN, COLLECTED 16,000 SIGNATURES, AND HAD A PROLONGED AUDIENCE WITH MR. FREDERICK MULLEY, SECRETARY REDEVELOP GREENHAM COMMON, A LITTLE USED STAND-BY NATO AIRFIELD SINCE 1964, INTO A FULLY OPERATIONAL BASE. IT WANTS TO STATION 15 KC-135 AIRCRAFT, A MILITARY CONVERSION OF THE BOEING 707, EACH ABLE TO CARRY 26,000 GALLONS OF AVIATION FUEL.

BY THE USAF'S OWN ADMISSION THE TANKER IS ONE OF THE NOISIEST AIRCRAFT IN EXISTENCE, SECOND ONLY TO CONCORDE.

THE PROTESTERS SAY THAT GREENHAM COMMON HAS A GREATER CONCENTRATION OF HOUSES, SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS WITHIN TWO MILES OF THE END OF THE RUNWAY THAN ALMOST ANY OTHER AIRFIELD IN BRITAIN.

ESTIMATES BY THE CAMPAIGNERS INDICATE THAT AT LEAST 10,000 RESIDENTS WOULD SUFFER AN INTOLERABLE NOISE LEVEL, AND 40,000 MORE SEVERE DISTURBANCE. THERE ARE ALSO 12 SCHOOLS, WITH 6,000 PULILS, WITHIN TWO MILES OF THE WESTERN END OF THE RUNWAY.

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL AND BERKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ARE OPPOSED TO ANY EXPANSION, ON THE GROUNDS OF NOISE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 04654 01 OF 02 221930Z

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PAGE 01 LONDON 04654 02 OF 02 221928Z
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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 04654

WEAPONS RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT AT ALDERMASTON AND THE
ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORY AT BURGHFIELD COMMON.

BUT AS GREENHAM IS A DEFENCE INSTALLATION THE LOCAL
COUNCILS ENJOY NONE OF THE USUAL RIGHTS OF PLANNING
CONSENT; THEY ARE MERELY ACCORDED THE COURTESY OF
CONSULTATION BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE.

ACCORDING TO THE CAMPAIGNERS, THERE ARE THREE OTHER
BASES MUCH MORE SUITABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT, NONE HAVING
A LARGE POPULATION ON ITS DOORSTEP.

MR. DENNIS SMITH, CHAIRMAN OF THE CAMPAIGN
COMMITTEE, SAID YESTERDAY: "WE ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE
VITAL DEFENCE NEEDS OF NATO, BUT WE CANNOT SEE WHY IT
HAS TO BE GREENHAM."

FROM THE USAF'S POINT OF VIEW GREENHAM IS FAR/FROM
UNDESIRABLE: IT HAS ONE OF THE LONGEST RUNWAYS IN THE
COUNTRY, IS WELL EQUIPPED AND, THE RESIDENTS SUSPECT,
HAPPENS TO BE A NICE PLACE FOR A POSTINO.

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PAGE 02 LONDON 04654 02 OF 02 221928Z

THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE INSISTS THAT NO DECISION
WILL BE TAKEN FOR SOME TIME. BUT RESIDENTS WERE
WONDERING YESTERDAY WHY WORKMEN WERE BUSILY REPAIRING
END TEXT.

2. IN THE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SECTION, RAY PEDLEY,
ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE DEPUTATION, AND HEADMASTER
OF THE PARK HOUSE SCHOOL, HAS A LETTER PUBLISHED,
THE THRUST OF WHICH IS TO SHOW THAT THERE IS A
"HIGHLY DETRIMENTAL" EFFECT ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN
EXAMS CAUSED BY AIRCRAFT NOISE. WHEN MAKING THIS
POINT TO THE AMBASSADOR, HE SAID HE DID SO REPRESENTING
12 LOCAL SCHOOLS AND THEIR 6,000 STUDENTS LOCATED
WITHIN TWO MILES OF GREENHAM COMMON.

STREATOR

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, MILITARY BASES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LONDON04654
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780126-0842
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780338/aaaabfvl.tel
Line Count: 166
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6e63c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 LONDON 4595
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 may 2006
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3240886
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RAF GREENHAM COMMON
TAGS: MPOL, MILI, SOPN, UK, US, NATO
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6e63c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014